

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02 CIEP-02

COME-00 EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 INT-08 OMB-01 SAM-01

SCI-06 STR-08 TRSE-00 AGR-20 IO-14 DRC-01 /236 W

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R 061600Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7407

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMXBSSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T ABIDJAN 1703

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, IV, XF

SUBJ: FAREWELL VISIT WITH HOUPHOUET

1. PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY INVITED ME TO PRIVATE LUNCHEON MARCH 2 AT HIS RESIDENCE, PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE TODAY. I WAS TOUCHED BY HIS FAREWELL GESTURE, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN MIDST OF BUSY SCHEDULE OF VISITORS AND MEETINGS. HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR CONVERSATION FOLLOWS.

2. MIDDLE EAST. PRESIDENT IS STILL DISTURBED OVER HIS BREAK WITH ISRAEL. ALTHOUGH HE TRIES TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH BOTH SIDES, HE NOW FEELS VERY HANDICAPPED AS ANY SORT OF INTERMEDIARY.

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MIDEAST PROBLEM AFFECTS ENTIRE WORLD, AND AT CORE IS PALESTINIAN

QUESTION. HOUPHOUET SAID ARAFAT TOLD HIM THAT ONLY A FIFTH OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT IS BAD, A DISTINCTION WHICH PLO HEAD WONDERED HOW HE COULD GET ACROSS TO USG. ARAFAT SAID PALESTINIANS SEEK MERELY A STATE OF THEIR OWN, THAT PART OF PALESTINE GIVEN TO JORDAN WOULD DO, CO-EXISTING PEACEFULLY ALONGSIDE ISRAEL.

3. RAW MATERIALS. PROBLEM OF PETROLEUM JUST ONE ASPECT OF OVERALL ISSUE OF FAIRNESS OF PRICES PRIMARY PRODUCTS, EG., COFFEE, COCOA. HOUPHOUET SAID HE IS THINKING ABOUT ATTENDING SPECIAL UNGA SESSION HIMSELF (SEPTEL). GOIC WILL NOT GO BEGGING ARAB OIL PRODUCERS FOR FAVORS OR CHARITY AS SOME OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS ARE DOING BUT WILL RETAIN ITS DIGNITY.

4. INFLATION. PRESIDENT CONCERNED ABOUT AND FEELS HE HAS A GOOD GRASP OF PROBLEM, REFERRING TO SEVERAL CABINET MEETINGS HE HELD LAST WEEK TO DEAL WITH THIS AND LOCAL PRICE SITUATION.

5. PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION. HOUPHOUET, SAYING HE WILL STEP DOWN WHEN HE IS SATISFIED HE HAS FORMED A TEAM TO TAKE OVER, NOTED HE LOOKING FOR AND TRAINING SUBORDINATES WITH CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP WHO WILL DIRECT COUNTRY ALONG ESTABLISHED LINES. IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT STAY IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS, AN ETHIOPIA-LIKE SITUATION COULD CONCEIVABLY ARISE HERE. NAMING NO NAMES, PERHAPS NOT HAVING MADE UP HIS OWN MIND ON A SUCCESSOR, HOUPHOUET GIVES ME IMPRESSION OF FEELING THAT HE WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE LEADING HIS COUNTRY FOR A WHILE LONGER. FOR THE FIRST TIME TO MY KNOWLEDGE, THE PRESIDENT HINTED THAT HE MAY BE THINKING ABOUT INSTALLING A VICE PRESIDENT.

6. AGRICULTURE. IVORY COAST SHOULD BE THE WORLD'S LARGEST COCOA PRODUCER IN SEVEN YEARS, HE PREDICTED.

7. COMMENT. I FOUND PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET, NOW 68, CHEERFUL, RELAXED, LICUD, AND FIT. HE HAS HIS OWN IDEAS ABOUT THINGS, WHICH HE DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN TO ME DURING LUNCH, BUT HIS POINTS ARE CAREFULLY REASONED. SO LONG AS THINGS CONTINUE GOING WELL WITH THE ECONOMY AND HE REMAINS PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY FIT, I SEE NO THREAT TO HOUPHOUET'S REMAINING AT THE HELM FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE; INDEED, THIS SEEMS TO BE THE WISH OF MOST IVORIANS WITH WHOM WE COME INTO CONTACT, SINCE THERE IS

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NO POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR ON THE HORIZON WHO IS AS YET GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. FINALLY, WITH RESPECT TO IVORIAN-

US RELATIONS, THIS AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS LEAVE ME CONVINCED THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CONCERN OVER THE LEVEL AND STABILITY OF PRICES

PAID FOR PRIMARY PRODUCTS, TIES BETWEEN US ARE EXCELLENT. EVEN IF THERE IS OCCASIONAL DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES ON SOME

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, THE FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT REMAINS GENUINE AND
CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE.

8. EMBASSY POUCHING MEMCON TO ADDRESSEES.
ROOT

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NNN

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